

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 2418

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINR CA

SUBJ: ERNEST HEBERT, CANADIAN CHARGE-DESIGNATE

1. ERNEST HEBERT, BORN MAY 8, 1939, MONTREAL, CANADA, HAS JUST COMPLETED THREE YEARS WITH THE CANADIAN PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UN AND IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN SAIGON THE FIRST WEEK IN AUGUST TO TAKE UP HIS DUTIES AS CHARGE OF CANADA'S EMBASSY TO THE REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM.

2. DURING HIS TOUR IN NEW YORK MR. HEBERT COVERED BASIC POLITICAL MATTERS AND SPECIALIZED IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS. HE WAS QUITE ADEPT AT MAKING CONTACTS WITH THE VARIOUS AFRICAN DELEGATIONS AND TRIED THROUGHOUT HIS TENURE TO ADVISE HIS FOREIGN OFFICE TO MODIFY THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD AFRICAN QUESTIONS THUS ALLOWING HIM TO VOTE WITH THE MAJORITY. ON CERTAIN ISSUES HE WAS SUCCESSFUL.

3. DURING HIS ASSIGNMENT TO THE UN HEBERT WAS DETAILED FOR SIX MONTHS (FEBRUARY--JULY 1973) TO THE CANADIAN CONTINGENT OF THE ICCS AND SERVED AS THE CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN DANANG. ALTHOUGH IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT ONE OF HIS AGE AND EXPERIENCE COULD HAVE REMAINED SO POLITICALLY NAIVE UNTIL THAT POINT, THIS ASSIGNMENT TO THE ICCS OPENED HIS EYES TO THE REALITIES OF DEALING WITH EASTERN EUROPEANS ON HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICAL QUESTIONS. HEBERT HAS FOND MEMORIES OF THE FEW

AMERICAN MILITARY WHOM HE MET IN VIET NAM AND LOOKS FORWARD TO HIS COMING ASSIGNMENT WITH THE HOPE THAT HE WILL FIND NEW BUT EQUALLY STRONG FIRENDSHIPS WITH OTHER OFFICIAL AMERICANS. ALTHOUGH HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC, HEBERT IS REASONABLE AND APPROACHABLE ON MOST MATTERS OF FOREIGN POLICY.

4. ALTHOUGH HE WAS RAISED IN A FAIRLY STRICT FRENCH-CATHOLIC FAMILY ATMOSPHERE AND WAS TRAINED IN THE JESUIT SCHOOL SYSTEM, HEBERT IS NO LONGER A PRACTICING CATHOLIC. HOWEVER HE MAINTAINS MANY OF THE TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES. PRIOR TO NEW YORK, HEBERT'S PREVIOUS POSTINGS INCLUDED KINSHASA (CIRCA 1968-1970) AND AN ASSIGNMENT TO THE MINISTER OF FINANCES OFFICE IN 1971.

5. HEBERT LIKES A WIDE VARIETY OF SPORTS, IN PARTICULAR SWIMMING, SKIING AND TENNIS. A VERY GREGARIOUS OUTGOING BACHELOR, HEBERT LIKES TO ENTERTAIN AND BE ENTERTAINED. HE DRINKS SCOTCH AND WATER AND SOMKES APPROXIMATELY A PACK AND A HALF OF CIGRRETTS A DAY.

6. MR. HEBERT, WHOSE MOTHER TONGUE IS FRENCH, IS EXTREMELY PROUD OF HIS FRENCH CANADIAN HERITAGE. HOWEVER IT IS ONLY ON RARE OCCASIONS THAT HE HAS EVER DISPLAYED SOME SYMPATHY TOWARD THE QUEBEC SEPARATIST MOVEMENT. A FIRM FOLLOWER OF PRIME MINIS TER TRUDEAU, HEBERT FEELS TRUDEAU'S LANGUAGE POLICY HAS DONE MUCH TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF THE CANADIAN FOREIGN OFFICE, THUS PUTTING HIM ON A MORE EQUAL FOOTING WITH HIS ANGLOPHONE COLLEAGUES. ALTHOUGH HEBERT SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH AT TIMES HE BECOMES CONFUSED BY IDIOMATIC ENGLISH. BENNETT

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